

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00
/052 W

-----011903Z 014823 /43

O R 011742Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9621
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION NATO
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 2497

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, SP
SUBJECT: PARTIDO POPULAR LEADER ON AREILZA'S DEPARTURE, SUAREZ
CANDIDACY, POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

REF: MADRID 2399

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, LEADING PARTIDO POPULAR
(PP) OFFICIAL JOSE LUIS ALVAREZ ALVAREZ SAID THAT IN EFFECT,
AREILZA HAD BEEN UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THE SECOND-FIDDLE
STATUS IMPLIED IN A CENTER-ORIENTED SUAREZ CANDIDACY, AND
HAD SIMPLY--AND SUDDENLY--QUIT, PLAYING AGAINST THE
DAY WHEN HE MIGHT BE CALLED IN AS PRIME MINISTER TO
RESOLVE A CRISIS OR OTHERWISE TAKE OVER FROM A FALTERING
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GOVT. ACCORDING TO ALVAREZ, AREILZA'S STATURE WAS SUCH THAT
HE DID NOT NEED AN ELECTORAL BASE TO SUPPORT SUCH A
PRETENSION, SO THE FACT THAT HE WOULD NOT RUN IN THE
NEXT ELECTIONS DID NOT MATTER.

2. REGARDING THE NOTORIOUS DINNER AT WHICH FIRST
VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVT OSORIO HAD SPOKEN CRITICALLY OF

AREILZA, ALVAREZ EMPHASIZED THAT THE OCCASION HAD BEEN PURELY SOCIAL AND HIGHLY INFORMAL. IN RESPONSE TO OSORIO'S REMARKS, SAID ALVAREZ, HE AND OTHERS HAD TOLD HIM HE WAS WRONG AND THAT THEY DID NOT AGREE WITH HIM, AND THEY HAD PROMPTLY TOLD AREILZA OF THE INCIDENT SO THAT HE WOULD NOT HEAR A DISTORTED VERSION FROM OTHERS. THE PP HAD NOT DUMPED AREILZA, SAID ALVAREZ, BUT RATHER THE OTHER WAY AROUND, AND IF AREILZA HAD BEEN HURT BY THE INCIDENT, THE PP HAD BEEN ALSO, WITH MANY PEOPLE ACCUSING IT UNJUSTLY OF HAVING SOLD OUT ITS ERSTWHILE LEADER. (ALL THIS JIBES WITH CABANILLAS' VERSION OF THE AREILZA INCIDENT, REF.)

3. ON THE QUESTION OF A SUAREZ CANDIDACY, ALVAREZ SAID HE FELT SUAREZ HAD NOT DECIDED BEYOND WHAT HE HAD TOLD THE SEVERAL CENTRIST LEADERS HE HAD MET WITH, THAT SOME KIND OF "ELECTORAL PRESENCE" BY THE GOVT WAS NECESSARY, BUT THE MODALITIES WOULD HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT. THE NEGOTIATIONS ON CANDIDATE LISTS WOULD BE TREMENDOUSLY COMPLICATED, SAID ALVAREZ, PARTICULARLY SINCE THERE WAS NO ELECTORAL EXPERIENCE OR DATA TO USE AS A GUIDE.

4. REGARDING THAT "ELECTORAL PRESENCE," ALVAREZ SAID HE PERSONALLY WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT IT BE UNNECESSARY, I.E., THAT THE CENTER HAD GOTTEN ITSELF TOGETHER AND AGREED ON ELECTORAL LISTS WHICH INCLUDED A NUMBER OF FIGURES WHOSE SUPPORT SUAREZ KNEW HE COULD COUNT ON. ALVAREZ ALSO REGRETTED THAT THE ELECTORAL LAW HAD TREATED SUAREZ AND THE CABINET MINISTERS DIFFERENTLY: NOT ONLY DID IT LOOK BAD, SAID ALVAREZ, WHICH WAS TROUBLESOME ENOUGH, BUT IT CONFIDENTIAL

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HAD HAD THE EFFECT OF DEPRIVING THE PP, OR MORE BROADLY THE PP-FATHERED CENTRO DEMOCRATICO, OF SEVERAL PROMINENT MINISTER WHO BECAUSE OF THEIR PAST ASSOCIATION WITH CENTRO COMPONENTS COULD LEGITIMATELY HAVE RUN ON THE CENTRO TICKET.

5. DESPITE THE REQUEST, ALVAREZ WAS ON BALANCE POSITIVE ABOUT WHAT HE KEPT CALLING A GOVERNMENTAL "ELECTORAL PRESENCE:"

--IT WAS LEGITIMATE, AND ALTHOUGH AN ISSUE IN SPAIN, WOULD BE SEEN AS NORMAL ELSEWHERE (HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM FRANCE):

--THAT THE GOS SHOULD PLACE ITSELF IN THE CENTER WAS LOGICAL, SINCE THAT WAS WHERE IN FACT IT STOOD;

--A "GOVERNMENT PRESENCE" SHOULD BE SUPPORTED BY THE CENTER SINCE THE CENTER HAD NEVER OPPOSED THE SUAREZ GOVT, BUT RATHER WAS PARALLEL TO IT AND SUPPORTED IT;

--IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IN KEEPING THE REMNANTS OF FRANCOISM AND OF THE GOVT APPARATUS IN THE PROVINCES FROM FOLLOWING

WHAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE THEIR NATURAL TENDENCY TO COLLAPSE INTO THE ALIANZA POPULAR.

WORKING OUT THE ELECTORAL INTERFACE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTAL PRESENCE AND THE CENTRO DEMOCRATICO WOULD BE ENORMOUSLY COMPLICATED, SAID ALVAREZ, SINCE NEITHER HAD SPRUNG FROM THE OTHER; BUTH THEIR COMMON PURPOSE AND SUBSTANTIAL OVERLAP IN POLITICAL BACKGROUNDS MADE A JOINT EFFORT LOGICAL.

6. ON OTHER POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, ALVAREZ SAID THE MERGER OF THE CENTRO DEMOCRATICO'S PPDC (ALVAREZ DE MIRANDA) AND THE UDE WOULD BE ANNOUNCED SHORTLY. UDE LEADER MONREAL LUQUE, A POLITICAL LIABILITY WHOM ALVAREZ CALLED "A DIFFICULT MAN," WOULD BE DROPPED FROM THE LEADERSHIP. ALVAREZ WAS CATEGORIC THAT THE PARTY (UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF ALVAREZ DE MIRANDA, SEPTTEL) WOULD REMAIN IN THE CENTRO DEMOCRATICO, AND HE SAW LITTLE PROSPECT OF MORE THAN LIMITED ELECTORAL COOPERATION WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC "TEAM": IDEOLOGICAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

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PROGRAMMATIC DIFFERENCES WERE SCANT, SAID ALVAREZ, BUT THE EQUIPO LEADERS' INSISTENCE ON AVOIDING DIRECT ASSOCIATION WITH ANY WHO HAD COLLABORATED WITH FRANCO MADE CLOSER COOPERATION IMPOSSIBLE.

7. ALVAREZ SAID HIS GREATEST CONCERN WAS THAT THE ELECTIONS BE BEYOND REPROACH, AND HE HAD SO EXPRESSED HIMSELF TO SUAREZ. ALTHOUGH THE LEFT (ESSENTIALLY, THE PSOE AND THE PSP) WOULD LOSE THE ELECTIONS, IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL PEACE IN SPAIN THAT IT NOT LOSE BADLY, AND HE HIMSELF HOPED THAT THE LEFT (PCE VOTES INCLUDED) WOULD GAIN AS MUCH AS 30PERCENT OF THE VOTE. FORTY YEARS OF FRANCO HAD LEFT THEIR MARK ON POPULAR ATTITUDES, HOWEVER, AND SAID ALVAREZ, RECENT POLLS (THERE ARE POLLS FOR EVERY TAST) SHOWED THE ALIANZA POPULAR GAINING IN STRENGHT. ALVAREZ WAS HOPEFUL THAT THE CENTER WOULD WIN MORE THAN THE LEFT OR THE RIGHT, BUT HE SAID HE SHOCKED SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES BY HOPING THAT IT WOULD NOT WIN SO HEAVILY AS TO MAKE EITHER EXTREME DESPAIR OF ITS SUBSEQUENT ELECTORATE PROSPECTS.

8. COMMENT: IN INSISTING ON THE FORMULATION "GOVERNMENTAL ELECTORAL PRESENCE" ALVAREZ MUST BE RELECTING A SCRUPLE SUAREZ USED IN DISCUSSING THE MATTER WITH CENTRIST LEADERS. SUAREZ HAS CAREFULLY REFRAINED FROM STATING FLATLY WHETHER OR NOT HE HIMSELF WILL RUN, AND WHILE THE MINISTERS WILL APPARENTLY STAY IN PLACE, IN ADDITION TO THE QUESTION OF SUAREZ' RUNNING THERE IS SERIOUS TALK OF THE RESIGNATIONS OF UNDERSECRETARIES AND DIRECTORS GENERAL TO FORM A NUCLEUS OF SUAREZ MEN IN ANY CENTRIST ELECTORAL EFFORT. EATON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MADRID02497
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770113-0332
Format: TEL
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770498/aaaadhut.tel
Line Count: 170
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Litigation History:
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Message ID: 397907ac-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 MADRID 2399
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2928005
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PARTIDO POPULAR LEADER ON AREILZA'S DEPARTURE, SUAREZ CANDIDACY, POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: PINT, SP
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/397907ac-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009